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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK IN AGRICULTURE  
AND HOME ECONOMICS.

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
and State Agricultural Colleges  
Cooperating.

States Relations Service,  
Office of Extension Work,  
North and West.  
Washington, D. C.

EXTENSION WORK WITH WOMEN.

WOMEN AS FARM LABORERS.

Below are a number of suggestions in reference to the recruiting and employment of women on the land. It contains the best information that has come to the States Relations Service. However, we will be pleased to receive any additional information regarding methods of recruiting and training women for farm work that may come to your attention, so that our information may be kept up to date.

As a rule the employment of women in the field operations should not be considered if the agricultural production can be maintained by the employment of men and boys. However, it may be necessary in certain communities, because of the draft and of the migration of the men and boys to the industrial centers, for women to participate in the farm labor at certain seasons. In such instances the Home Demonstration and County Agent should do their part in seeing that there is not a decrease in production by aiding the farmers in securing women farm workers.



Among the sources from which additional labor may be obtained on the farms are, (1) from among the women already on farms; (2) from relatives of farmers who are living in cities and who are willing to work on farms during slack business or industrial periods; (3) from the foreign women who are accustomed to work in the fields under a system of intensive agriculture before migrating to this country; and (4) from women in nearby villages and towns who might be employed on farms and still live at home.

Thus, if in any community it becomes necessary to employ women, the principal problems to be met are to stimulate women to take up farm work and to make farmers realize the necessity of using woman-labor in order to maintain a production sufficiently large to raise the products necessary to feed the people of our own country and to make up the deficit in the crops of our allies.

This campaign of publicity should be carried to the farmers through the press, through their agricultural organizations, particularly the Farm Bureau, and, if necessary, by means of mass meetings. In a similar way the women on the farms and in the cities could be appealed to.

In connection with most of the farm bureaus there is maintained a county labor exchange, and in each community there is a committeeman who acts as a medium of exchange within his own community and with the county farm bureau organization. In listing the farmer desiring woman-laborers, he should indicate the kind of work which he wants done, the amount, and the probable dates and wages offered, and the woman engaging herself should indicate the kinds of work she is willing to do, and whether she is willing to work all day and every day in the week. It should be thoroughly understood by all parties concerned that the women are to receive a wage equal



to that given men for performing the same amount of work. Wherever possible, this can be brought about by putting the work on the piece basis.

The function of the Home Demonstration Agent and the County Agent would be to see that the county exchange listed all women desiring work, as well as the farmers desiring women farm workers. If there were a sufficient demand in certain communities for women, one of the local women committeemen might act as the medium of local exchange. The Home Demonstration and County Agents should also keep in touch with the Farm Help Specialist, employed by the Office of Farm Management of this Department. She should be ready to advise the various committees as to whether the conditions under which women work on farms are satisfactory, and not detrimental to their health and morals.

There is another class of labor which might be developed, but as yet in most parts of the United States the difficulty of securing farm labor has not become sufficiently great to call for their organization. This class consists of women with no farm experience who are willing to be trained to go on farms to work. This method of providing farm labor requires such extensive and detailed supervision that it cannot be accomplished without great expense. However, it may be advisable in certain parts of the country to recruit and train this kind of labor during the coming season. If it is, the following facts should be taken into consideration.

No woman should be accepted who is not at least eighteen years of age. The wisest policy would be to first register those women who are willing to undertake this kind of work, having them indicate their previous training and experience, kind of farm work they desire to take up, and length of time they can devote to it.

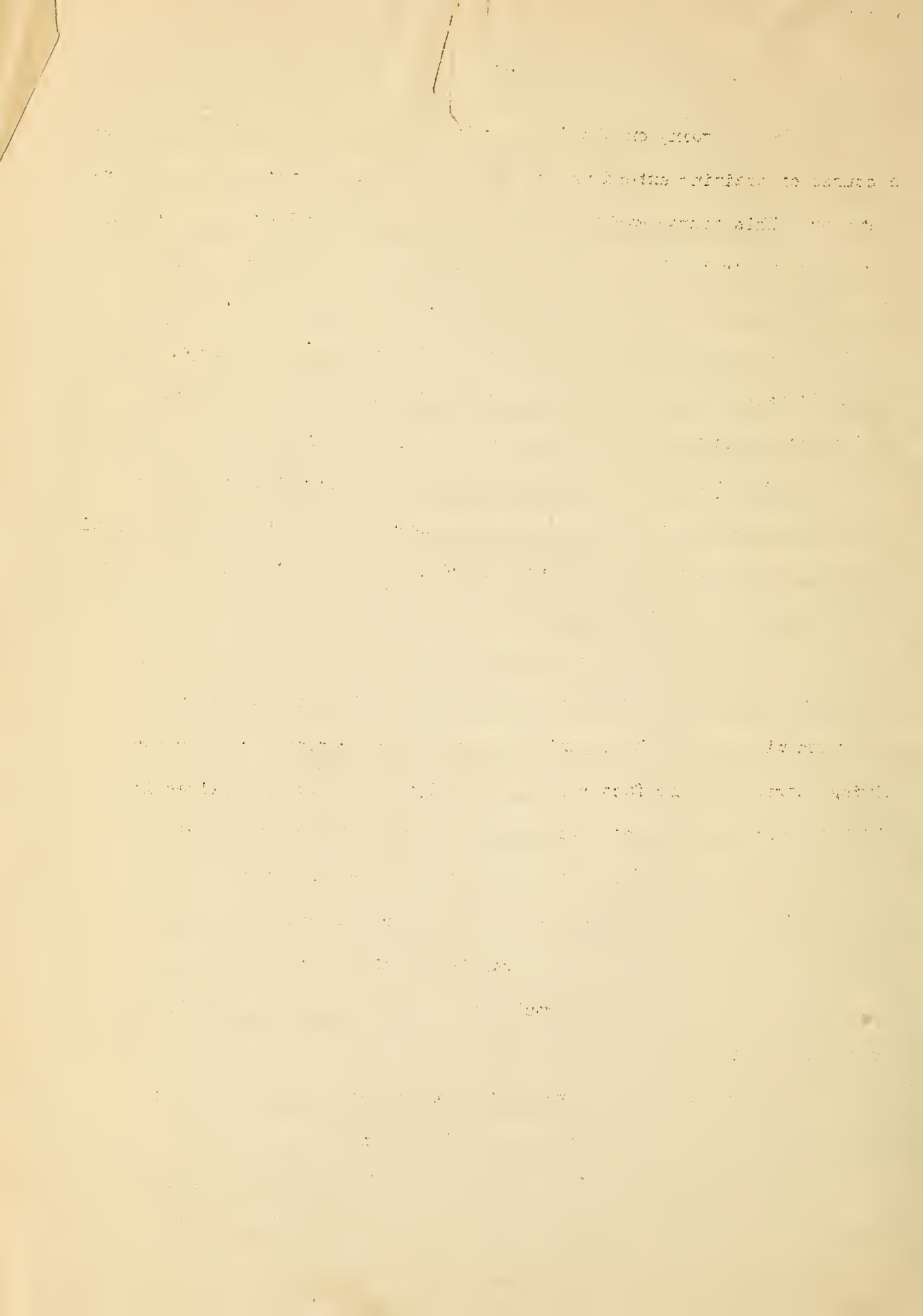




Before going on the farm, the women should if possible undertake a course of training extending over two weeks or more, under a skilled instructor. This course might be given at an agricultural or a women's college, agricultural schools, or on a farm donated by some patriotic individual as a practice farm. In some instances the course might be under the auspices of the Extension Division of the agricultural college. Care should be taken that no institutions are built up to perform functions that might be performed by institutions already in existence.

This two weeks of training would give opportunity to weed out those not physically able to endure farm labor, and also those whose mental make-up is such as to make them unavailable. It would also give them sufficient skill so that they would be acceptable to the farmers. Such experience in recruiting as has been had, indicates that the farmer is not usually willing to take women farm workers into his home, and therefore the women will have to be organized in units and provide for their own living quarters. This fact restricts the types of farm enterprises in which the women will be able to engage to such as are very intensive in character, and highly localized. The types of farm enterprises of this kind would be such crops as apples, peaches, grapes, onions, cabbage, potatoes, strawberries, etc. The training should be such that when the women went to the farmers they would have at least sufficient skill to be acceptable to the farmer.

Before training the recruits, some method should be devised for ascertaining whether there was a demand for the women farm workers in the kind of work they are preparing to undertake. This information could be obtained from the State agricultural college and the State farm help specialist, employed by this Department. Great care should be exercised



not to recruit and train women to go on farms before there is an actual demand for their labor.

After completing the training, the women should not be sent into the localities where they are to work until someone has preceded them to make arrangements for their housing and to determine the basis of wages, etc. In most instances the living quarters would consist of a camping outfit, as such quarters as they might obtain in the community would be the least desirable of those in the community. Generally it would be desirable to have one person in the group who would do no farm work, but would act as general chaperone and matron, and would see to the domestic phases of their living and welfare.

